

MINUTES of the meeting of Herefordshire Schools Forum held at Council Chamber, Brockington, 35 Hafod Road, Hereford HR1 1SH on Friday 10 June 2011 at 9.30 am

Present: Councillor Ms T Kneale (Chairman)
Councillor Mr NPJ Griffiths (Vice Chairman)

Councillors: Mrs JS Powell, Mr P Burbidge, Mrs S Catlow-Hawkins, Mr N O'Neil, Mr S Woodrow, Mr S Pugh, Mrs J Cecil, Mr P Box, Mr S Matthews, Mrs J Baker, Mr TE Edwards, Mrs S Bailey, Mr J Docherty, Ms A Pritchard, Mr M Harrisson, Mr J Godfrey, Mr A Shaw, Mrs A Jackson, Mrs R Lloyd, Mr P Barns and Dr M Goodman

In attendance: Councillors PD Price

1. NAMED SUBSTITUTES

(Mr N Griffiths Vice-Chairman in the Chair)

There were none.

It was noted that Revd D Hyett had retired and been replaced on the Forum by Mr A Teale.

2. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from Mr J Chapman.

3. ELECTION OF CHAIRMAN

RESOLVED: That Ms T Kneale be elected Chairman of the Forum for the ensuing year.

(Ms T Kneale in the chair)

4. ELECTION OF VICE-CHAIRMAN

RESOLVED: That Mr N Griffiths be elected Vice-Chairman of the Forum for the ensuing year.

5. ELECTION OF CHAIRMAN OF BUDGET WORKING GROUP

RESOLVED: That Mrs J Powell be elected Chairman of the Budget Working Group for the ensuing year.

6. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were none.

7. CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

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There were none.

8. MINUTES

RESOLVED: That the Minutes of the meeting held on 2 March 2011 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

9. HEREFORDSHIRE SCHOOLS FORUM MEMBERSHIP

The Forum considered amendments to the Forum's Membership.

The Forum had deferred consideration of this issue in March deciding that consideration of the options for changes to the membership should be referred to the Primary Schools Forum, Association of Secondary Head Teachers and the Herefordshire Association of School Governors for consideration.

The Primary Schools Forum considered that it was not practical to make a decision at this stage. No view had been expressed by the Herefordshire Association of School Governors. The view of the Association of Herefordshire Secondary Head Teachers (HASH) was reported at the meeting. HASH considered that it was important to retain continuity of membership in the current circumstances and the effect of this was to increase the number of Academy representatives within its representation so achieving proportional representation of secondary school membership. The Forum agreed that the Cabinet Member (Education and Corporate) who was responsible for determining the membership should be advised accordingly.

RESOLVED:

That the Cabinet Member (Corporate and Education) be advised:

- (a) that Herefordshire Association of Secondary Headteachers wished to retain continuity in its representation on the Forum, the effect of which would be to increase the number of Academy representatives within its representation from one to two so reflecting proportional representation of academies at secondary schools on the Forum; and**
- (b) that it be noted that a view from the Primary Schools Forum was still awaited.**

10. REPORT OF BUDGET WORKING GROUP - 6 MAY 2011

The Forum considered the initial discussions of the Budget Working Group on 6 May 2011 relating to the Dedicated Schools Grant budget for 2012/13.

The Chairman of the Budget Working Group commented on the principal matters the Group had so far discussed, as set out in the key points summary in the report. The Group's intention was to produce financial models showing the potential impact on school budgets depending on what choices were made. A draft consultation document would be prepared for consideration by the Forum in September setting out options.

The Schools Finance Manager highlighted the Group's discussion about reviewing the way in which grants that had been mainstreamed into the Dedicated Schools Grant were allocated. These issues would also be reflected in the draft consultation document.

In discussion the following principal points were made:

- It was noted that any changes to Teachers' pension arrangements would represent a budget pressure that schools would have to absorb. Balances were held for this purpose.
- The Budget Working Group had not yet given consideration to balances held by schools but could do so.
- The report stated that charitable rates relief savings were potentially available to foundation and academy schools. The Budget Working Group had asked for a foundation schools conversion programme to be taken forward.

The Director of People's Services commented that there was some merit in exploring the potential savings from charitable rates relief. However, it was essential to recognise that any decision to convert to foundation status rested with individual schools. In considering such a decision schools needed to take account of a range of other issues and in particular what would secure the best education for pupils. Furthermore this was only one aspect of the financial model and consideration needed be given to all the various options for achieving budget savings.

- Members of the Forum expressed a wish for the Director to give a presentation to the Forum on a vision and strategy for education in the County to provide a framework within which schools could operate.

The Director commented that there needed to be a shared vision recognising the autonomy of schools. She offered to produce a discussion paper on the guiding principles underpinning education and learning in the County, noting also that the Forum had to include Early Years education and learning as well as schools.

Members requested that the discussion paper should not be pitched at such a high level that it became bland and platitudinous. There were a number of difficult decisions to be faced and the discussion paper should reflect this and prompt meaningful discussion and debate. How funding decisions would support that vision would also be relevant.

RESOLVED:

- That**
- (a) the initial considerations of the Budget Working Party for the 2012/13 Dedicated Schools Grant be noted;**
 - (b) it be noted that the draft consultation paper on budget options would be submitted to the Forum for consideration in September; and**
 - (c) a paper be submitted to the Forum in September by the Director for People's Services on the guiding principles underpinning the Council's vision for education and learning in the County.**

11. CONSULTATION ON SCHOOL FUNDING REFORM

The Forum considered a presentation on the national consultation papers on school funding reform and academies pre-16 funding.

The Schools Finance Manager (SFM) reported that the Directorate had responded to the consultation papers and the responses would be shortly available on Schools online.

He gave a presentation on School Funding Reform providing an update from a conference held in Birmingham on 13 May 2011.

Key points from the conference were:

- Pupils with similar characteristics do not receive the same support.
- The consensus in local authorities was that the reasons for change included that the current national system failed to reflect need, was not the product of a rational decision making process, was based on historical decisions, or decisions not to take decisions and was stretched to breaking point by academy funding arrangements that were complicated and unsustainable.
- The aim should be to devise a simple funding formula.
- There were a number of big issues to consider in the national funding formula: funding of small schools, SEN funding, Special School funding, the national definition of delegation versus retained services, managing turbulence and post 16 funding arrangements.
- Reform would be challenging with relative winners and losers.
- There were a range of issues related to the funding of academies.
- Transition arrangements and the timing of the implementation of changes.

Members noted that the transitional arrangements would mean that it would be some 3-4 years before the full impact of the changes on school budgets became clear.

The SFM commented that it was likely that the settlement from the Department for Education would, as in 2010/11, be announced late in the year. The preparation of the budget would therefore again have to be completed within a tight and compressed timescale.

RESOLVED: That both consultation papers and the possible future implications for schools in Herefordshire be noted.

12. SCHOOL STRATEGIC GROUP UPDATE

The Forum considered progress being made by the Schools Strategic Group.

The importance of ensuring that there was feedback from the Group was noted.

RESOLVED: That progress made by the School Strategic Group be noted.

13. SCHOOLS' CAPITAL INVESTMENT PROGRAMME

The Forum considered a report on capital funding arrangements for 2011/12 and a summary of the James Review of capital expenditure in schools.

The Head of Access and Capital Commissioning (HACC) presented the report. The capital allocations for the County showed an 80% decrease in schools' devolved formula capital allocations. Although, in part, this was due to the Government allocating the bulk of capital maintenance grant to the Local Authority, rather than to schools, the overall capital allocation for 2011/12 was about £1.4 million below the 2010/11 allocation. This funding was for local authority maintained schools. Capital funding for Academies was

provided separately. He noted that the capital allocations for 2012/13 were not yet known and this complicated planning expenditure.

He highlighted the recommendations of the James Review commissioned by the Department of Education (DfE) to ensure that future capital investment would provide good value for money and support the Government's ambitions. The recommendations were expected largely to be adopted by the Government. He considered that the Council was well placed to respond to the recommendations through its established Capital Expenditure Group. Academy representation was to be added to that Group.

The funding of ICT equipment was discussed. The HACC explained that the demise of the Harnessing Technology Grant had placed some schools in difficulties. Whilst in general Schools should meet ICT expenditure from devolved capital funding they were able to bid for funding for ICT from the authority. Priority was being given to ICT schemes that would have been funded from that Grant. He confirmed that there was liaison with ICT colleagues who could keep the schools ICT liaison group informed.

It was requested that a summary of the allocation of funding for capital investment in schools in 2010/11 be circulated to all schools.

RESOLVED:

That (a) the position on the Schools Capital Investment Programme be noted; and

(b) that a summary of the Authority's allocation of funding for capital investment in schools in 2010/11 be circulated to all Schools.

14. SCHOOLS LIBRARY SERVICE OFFER 2011/2012

The Forum considered the proposed revision of the scheme of delegation for the funding of the Schools Library Service for 2011/12 together with information on the new cultural offer to schools.

The Principal Officer Outreach and Access presented the report.

Since 2000, funding delegated to schools for the Schools Library Service had been ringfenced. A new service arrangement was to be put in place for 2012/13. However, it was proposed that the ringfencing be removed with immediate effect and schools be authorised now to use money delegated to them for expenditure on the library service in 2011/12 in line with the general scheme of delegation.

RESOLVED: That the scheme of delegation for the Schools Library Service be revised so that the funding arrangement is in line with that for other services for 2011/12 onwards.

15. REVIEW OF SEN FUNDING

The Forum considered a series of options for the funding of SEN pupils in mainstream schools.

The Head of Additional Needs outlined the key issues to which consideration needed to be given.

Recognising the complexity of the issue it was proposed that a Working Group be formed to consider the options and report back to the Forum in September with a draft consultation paper.

RESOLVED:

- That (a) a Working Group be formed to consider options for the funding of SEN pupils in mainstream schools reporting back to the Forum in September 2011; and
- (b) the following be nominated to serve on the Working Group: Mrs S Bailey, Ms T Kneale, Mr N O'Neil, Mr S Pugh, Mr A Shaw, and Mrs S Catlow-Hawkins, with SENCO representation also to be sought and any other interested person it is considered should be invited.

16. UPDATE ON SERVICE LEVEL AGREEMENTS

The Forum considered an update on Service Level Agreements.

The Assistant Director – Planning, Performance and Development presented the report noting the aim was to build upon work done to date and improve processes for the 2012/13 Agreements.

In discussion the following principal points were made:

- In response to a question about the charge for the Education Welfare Service the Assistant Director confirmed that work to improve understanding of costs and achievement of full cost recovery was continuing. The extent to which income from some services was used to support other services also needed to be considered.
- The market place event had been helpful, providing information about services in a transparent way that had assisted schools in making choices about service provision.
- The appendix to the report showed a very low uptake of a small number of services, for example ICT technical support. It was asked what impact this would have on those services. The Assistant Director commented that the viability of ICT as a whole service was not in question. However, where services proved not to be viable they could no longer be delivered. He observed that the late notification to schools of their budgets and the short length of the SLAs were complicating service planning.
- Asked about the availability of benchmarking information on the buy back of services the Assistant Director said that more work on benchmarking remained to be done. He observed that a competitive market was in operation and some information was commercially sensitive. The Director for People's Services added that discussions were taking place with neighbouring authorities about service delivery with the possibility of one area offering some services to the others and vice versa.

RESOLVED: That the development of Service Level Agreements to date, purchasing levels and plans for future development be noted.

17. FUNDING FOLLOWING THE STUDENT FROM PUPIL REFERRAL UNITS (PRUS)

The Forum considered a mechanism to allow 'funding to follow the student' when transferring to a different school after being on the roll of a PRU

The Head of Additional Needs presented the report which had been produced in response to the Forum's request in March.

The Forum considered it important that funding should be transferred for one school to another as soon as was practicable.

Concern was expressed about the financial implications of in-year moves of other pupils. It was noted that the Authority could not refuse a request for a pupil to transfer from one school to another where a place at the preferred school was available. A report could, however, be made to the Forum on the operation of the in year fair access placement panel and the funding implications for schools.

RESOLVED:

- That
- (a) **the Forum's endorsement of the principle that funding will follow a student to their new school if they are permanently excluded and are admitted to a different Herefordshire secondary school or the school is in receipt of a pupil through the managed moves programme be confirmed, noting this would apply to all secondary schools including academies, such funding to be passported as soon as was reasonably practicable;**
 - (b) **the local authority collection of the funding from the pupil's former school in order to fund the PRU provision as agreed by the Schools Forum in March 2011 be supported and, where the pupil is allocated a place on the roll of a different school, the transference by the LA of the same level of funding to the receiving school; and**
 - (c) **that a report be made to a future meeting on the operation of the in year fair access placement panel and the funding implications for schools of in-year transfers.**

18. STATEMENT OF INTENT - HEALTH & SAFETY AUDIT OF SCHOOLS

The Forum was informed of the Council Resilience Team's intent to conduct schools' Health & Safety audits and inspections with effect from 1 Sep 2011.

The Resilience Team Manager presented the report. Further to previous reports to the Forum, most recently in March 2011, she emphasised the Authority's intention to resume responsibility for health and safety audits and outlined the implications of this for the role of Trade Union Representatives. An inspection programme was being developed and would be circulated to schools for consultation.

She confirmed that the Council would fund its health safety responsibilities. Funding for Trade Union Representatives would be under the Trade Union Facilities Agreement.

It was noted that the Trade Unions were satisfied with the proposals with the exception of the provision in recommendation (d), as printed, that Trade Union Safety Representatives would only continue with their statutory responsibilities on sites where they were employed. The Director for People's Services commented that this provision needed to be retained but the precise wording would need to be discussed further at the Joint Consultative Committee.

RESOLVED:

That it be noted that:

- (a) **Teacher Trade Union Safety Representatives would continue to provide schools' Health & Safety audit services on behalf of Herefordshire Council, as per current arrangements, until 1 September 2011;**
- (b) **Herefordshire Council (Resilience Team) will conduct schools' audits and inspections with effect from 1 Sep 2011;**

- (c) **Coordinated by Herefordshire Council, joint Health & Safety audits/inspections of schools by Herefordshire Council and Trade Union Safety Representatives will be encouraged;**
- (d) **the Council and Unions were to clarify and finalise the wording of the following principle: that Post Sep 2011, Teacher Trade Union Safety Representatives will continue with their statutory responsibilities but only in the sites where they have membership and are employed.**

19. WORK PROGRAMME

The Forum considered its Work Programme.

It was agreed that the work programme should be updated to include the following:

- Review of in Year Access Panel and Funding implications For Schools
- Budget Consultation Paper
- Guiding principles underpinning the Council's vision for education and learning in the County.

20. LATE ITEMS/ANY OTHER BUSINESS

The Chairman paid tribute to the Forum's outgoing Chairman, Julie Powell, for her sterling work in steering the Forum through challenging times.

The Chairman also thanked Kathy Roberts, Assistant Director – Improvement and Inclusion, who was taking on a new role, for her support to the Forum

21. FORTHCOMING MEETINGS

The Forum noted that the next meeting was scheduled to be held at 1.30 pm on Friday 23 September.

The meeting ended at 11.55 am

CHAIRMAN